1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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Silwa

life of the villagers—religion. Next to the mosques in appearance and cleanliness are some of the shops and stores. These must have a minimum standard of building requirements, according to official regulations. On the north side of the village stand the police station, the post office and the elementary school. As to the fields, they extend to the west of the railway road up to the Nile bank, where the water-pumping works, established in 1932, stands with its modern buildings and garden and electric light.

It is worth mentioning here that each of the ten villages constituting the administrative unit of Silwa has its own name and is separated from its neighbours, however close these may be, by a recognized boundary, e.g. a high mound, a valley, or a stretch of gravel or sand. Each of these villages (or two villages combined, as in the case of four of the villages) has its mosque and village saint tomb with a cemetery attached to it. In spite of the fact that all the villages attached to Silwa trace their origin to one ancestor, as will be discussed later, their spatial separation is associated with sub-divisions in their kinship relations.

The physical characteristics of the inhabitants of these villages show a considerable degree of homogeneity. With their dark skins and long heads, they seem to conform to the ancient Southern Egyptian type.[1] All the inhabitants of Silwa, however, take great pride in describing themselves as descendants of Arab stock related to the Prophet. They refer to their traditions and customs and even their dress as 'Arabian'. Whether their claim is true or not, the belief is of central importance as one of the cohesive forces in the village community, and it is the means by which the villagers, especially the older generation, distinguish their way of life from that of others.[2]

The rhythm of daily life in Silwa hardly varies. The break of dawn witnesses the muazzin calling for morning prayers; youths and men, mounted on their donkeys or camels, call on each other to climb the hills to fetch the fertilizer. By sunrise, most men and boys are heading towards the fields with their cattle and tools; and by broad daylight the village seems

[1] A. Batrawi, who has studied the physical anthropology of Egyptians, maintains that there is some justification for the usual division of Egypt into Upper and Lower Regions as far as the cephalic index is concerned. The people of Upper Egypt have longer but narrower heads, and longer fingers, feet and forearms than those of Lower Egypt. His study of the living samples of modern Egyptian population from all over Egypt suggests that they conform more closely to the Ancient Southern type. Moreover, the distribution of blood groups in present-day Egypt shows that the mass of the population is very homogeneous and there are no significant differences in this respect between the Moslems and the Copts. 'The Racial History of Egypt, Part II—Relationships of the Ancient and Modern Population of Egypt and Nubia', in *Journal of Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LXXVI, 1946, pp. 131–55.

[2] Arab genealogies must be accepted with great caution. The notion of the Arabs as a conquering race, known for their gallantry, honour and power, played effectively on the minds of the indigenous stock of the fellaheen, who showed an earnest desire to be considered members of that race. Many fellaheen have succeeded in linking themselves to an Arab tribe. A. Ammar, *The People of Sharqiya* (Ph.D. thesis, Manchester University), pp. 13–21.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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dered; but everyone must give them something, even 'ten or eleven cobs of millet'. The same procedure of payment applies to the village undertaker and the man who calls the prayer-times (muazzin) and the postman. In the case of the man who leads the prayers (imam), villagers send his 'custom' to his home, besides the small amount of money he receives from the 'Ministry of Religious Endowments'. In other words, the artisans as a group are maintained by the community they serve, and are not paid by a fixed price for their results. There is an observable change in this 'maintenance basis' especially in the case of the carpenter on his making of furniture and doors.

The members of the third family of strangers are Christians (Coptic Church) who mainly derive their livelihood from the income of their corn mill and who live on the other side of the railway track. They had monopolized milling for twenty years. Then four persons from the village in competition started another corn-mill. Both these undertakings later co-operated and raised the charges, and it was this that gave an impetus to the whole village last year to establish a communal corn-mill.

The fourth family which has a specialized job is that of the water-carriers who are also alien to the village. They live on its western border nearer to the Nile from which they draw water to distribute in water-skins to the homes of government officials, shopkeepers, childless couples and others, when extra water is required. They are paid either in bread, corn, or money, according to what they bring, and not on a 'maintenance basis' as their comparatively late arrival in the village has been welcomed by government officials, policemen, or childless people.

Sixty years ago the first shop was opened in the village by a family called al Hudoor from Esna, in the Province of Kena.[1] Ten years later the first man from the village itself opened the second shop. At present, there are about thirty shops of varying size which have mostly started up during the last ten years. Payment for goods sold has been, more often than not, at the end of the harvest period. The shopkeepers keep an account of what customers buy, to be presented to them at this time. The same applies at present to most of the village government officials or wage-earners, who pay their bills for purchased goods at the end of the month.

The market-day, held every Saturday (i.e. at the beginning of the week), is the main day for buying and selling. On this day economic as well as social exchange takes place, and it is said, 'Even to get the market's dust is better than not going to it'. Until three years ago the majority of the traders came from Edfu, the nearest town to Silwa. Retail traders, shoemakers, butchers, silversmiths, and coffee-makers come in to sell the villagers their goods, while commercial dealers buy crops, sheep, chickens and eggs. Since then, the number of traders from Edfu has diminished considerably, as a result of the increase in the number of village traders.

[1] Plural of 'al Hadari' meaning coming from the town, which was the name given to them by the villagers at that time and which they still retain.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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crops have been adopted, besides vegetables and clover (berseem). During the last five years, persons who had sufficient land have started to grow sugar-cane and cotton with these two crops. This widened cropping has been due to the need for more cash crops, and to the increase in transport facilities for selling sugar-cane and cotton. On the whole, however, the village produces mainly subsistence crops, which form the basis of the villagers' bread intake.

The agricultural activities in the village are regulated by the time-honoured Ancient Egyptian calendar which is now known as the Coptic Calendar, and this co-exists with the two other calendars, the Moslem (Hijri) and the European (Miladi).[1] These three calendars are used by the villagers in different circumstances. The Coptic Calendar is the oldest in use, followed by the Hijri or lunar one, whilst the European has been adopted in Egypt since 1875. While the Coptic Calendar, based on the solar system, is mainly used to regulate and co-ordinate the agricultural activities, the Hijri Calendar, based on the lunar system, fixes the religious and ceremonial feasts; the European is mainly used for activities connected either with legal procedures or other official business. More often than not, especially with the older generation, the European dates are changed into either the Coptic or lunar dates.[2]

The methods and implements of work are more or less the same traditional ones known to have been used by the Egyptian farmer for thousands of years. The 'touriah' or the 'fass' is the indispensable implement to any farmer. It is a kind of hoe which can be turned to many uses, such as breaking up clods of earth, digging furrows, scraping fertilizer clay from the hills, and so forth. For ploughing, he uses the Egyptian plough called 'mihrat', dragged by one or two yoked cows. The water-wheel and the 'shadoof' are used at present only for irrigating the small parcels of land which are higher than the water level in the canals. Such plots of land are very few, compared with large areas which are easily irrigated by merely opening the runnel between the field and the canal, which is filled by the water raised by the pumping machine. The farmer also uses the 'garraffa', which is a beam of wood or a trunk of a palm-tree, to level down land after breaking up the clods with the hoe.[3]

In these methods of work, farm labour is extensive rather than intensive. Work is spread over almost the whole year. Of course, every farmer knows that more effort and concentration are called for in the two periods, that of preparing the soil and sowing of the seeds, and that of harvesting. Again, the gathering of fertilizer and manure is an equally important and arduous task, though more spread out during the period of two or four months for

[1] The Hijri Calendar starts with the flight of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina in A.D. 622.

[2] See Appendix II for a note on the use of lunar and Coptic months in the village with the agricultural and religious activities connected with them.

[3] For methods and implements of farm work in Egypt see Henry Habib-Ayrout, *The Fellahin*, Chapter IV, Cairo (n.d.).

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enjoy the pleasure and prestige of 'mothers of children'. Thus in the same way, the girl, in relation to her mother, is not only considered as an economic asset but a means for getting more leisure and freedom from the pressure of work.

It is appropriate here to state the various activities which both boys and girls are expected to perform. Age and physical fitness determine the various tasks allotted to them.

In the case of boys, farm work is divided into three main categories, according to their ability to perform those duties independently. In the first stage, from seven to ten years, the boy is called 'hawwal', meaning that he can direct the water into the farm sections and is able to regulate by himself the process of irrigation. Twenty years ago, when the village was under basin irrigation, boys who used to attend to the turning of the water-wheel were called 'jaizar', but as there are very few water-wheels nowadays, this word is not commonly used in connection with this stage. Compulsory schooling for those who cannot evade it has made this job a part-time one.

From the age of twelve or thirteen boys are expected to undertake the conveying of fertilizer from the hills, and they are called at this stage 'marraga'—the bringers of 'marog'. They are trained by the age group that is immediately above them. A boy on his first 'hill ascent' to get the 'marog' must give the older boys with whom he is to be associated a present of wheat, bread and dates. If he does not fulfil this obligation, they usually, on their arrival at the 'marog' spot, undo the camel's reins and put them round the boy's face and neck, returning the camel empty to the boy's field. After fulfilling his obligation, they take him with them, and help him to learn the techniques of loading the camel and discovering the best kind of 'marog'.

At this stage also a boy starts tackling the 'shadoof' or as more commonly called in this district the 'ood'. If he can manipulate this instrument properly the boy is called 'awwad'. It is well established that a 'marrag' or an 'awwad' is almost synonymous to a good eater, and his request for food and the increase of frequency of meals and their quantity are usually complied with, as a recognition of his tangible economic contribution.

The third stage sets in by the appearance of the first traces of the boy's moustache, when he becomes a fully-fledged farmer, 'nabbar' or a 'fellah', from the age of seventeen onwards. The hallmark of this stage is for the boy to be allowed to sow the seeds, and to distribute fertilizer on the farm, as these are supposed to be the most skilful tasks in agriculture.

These three economic stages coincide almost with the three categories of the social grouping in the village, namely the group of youngsters, adolescents or non-married men, and fully-fledged men. One of the important qualifications for a grown-up marriageable youth is his ability to perform the various stages of cultivation, graduating, as it were, by becoming a competent farmer, able to sow the seeds and distribute the fertilizer.

LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

883 868 With regard to girls, there are no definite stages for female domestic tasks, but it is well known that the last stage of learning in a girl's home management skills is that connected with kneading and baking. The need for mothers to let their daughters take over their tasks is not so acute as with the fathers in relation to their sons. This is understandable, as the 554 son is socially the symbol of the family and his skills are to perpetuate the family pattern of life.

857 The following is a detailed duty sheet of the farm and home tasks expected from both boys and girls at different ages:

Boys	*Girls*
FROM THREE TO SEVEN	
No serious tasks are expected till the age of five, whereupon they are required to work as messengers fetching goods from the shop, or running errands for their parents, uncles, etc. . . . fetching and taking things from and to other homes.	Care of infants is one of the girl's main tasks at all ages, and starts as early as five, when she takes her younger sibling outside for play, or attends to him while mother is doing some domestic task.
[202] Children (between five and seven) are considered to be the best messengers, especially for invitations or for asking help from neighbours, and borrowing from them, being [312] less embarrassed, less inquisitive, and only repeating faithfully what is told to them.	Runs errands like boys, especially for her mother or aunt, e.g. fetching fire, bringing food or other things that need to be hidden with the dangling parts of her head-cloth.
[372] In the absence of older sisters he takes care of his younger brother or sister.	Accompanies mother to the well or to the Nile with her small pot or tin, carried on her head and supported by her lifted arms.
[241] Towards the end of this period he goes to the field with his older siblings, or with his father, riding behind him on donkey back or balanced in one of the camel's panniers.	Helps mother in bringing fuel to the oven or the fire, consisting of millet stems, tree branches, dry animal dung, etc.
Helps in carrying grass to the animals, scaring birds from the field, filling water-pots from the canal; ties or unties the cow, donkey and camel for his father or older brother.	Makes her own loaf with the last bit of dough which she eats after it is baked. This is a means of her initiation to domestic tasks by being 'moistened with the dough', and a reminder that 'kneading and baking' are one of the most important jobs for a girl.
[868] On the whole for him this is a stage of observation without allotted specific responsibilities. As the villagers put it, this is the period for children 'to be moistened with earth'.	

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[Boys] [GIRLS] 857

LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

FROM SEVEN TO TWELVE[1]

Before the introduction of compulsory schooling and perennial irrigation, the specific responsibility for this period was irrigation—he still helps with it in the afternoon.

Collects leaves, clover, grass, and weeds for feeding the animals, takes animals to water, as tending animals is his main responsibility, whether at home or in the field.

Fetches drinking water on donkey-back.

Helps in harvesting.

Helps in digging land, breaking up clods with the hoe as an introduction to his use of implements.

Takes out and leads his blind or old father or grandfather.

Takes corn on donkey-back to the mill to be ground.

Tasks of previous period if no younger sibling in the family.

Establishment of tasks of preceding period, and helping mother in food preparation.

Fetches water from the Nile in a larger jar, as towards end of this period she can balance the filled jar on head without support of hands. [312] [482] [281]

Takes midday meal to the field, and brings home dates and vegetables.

Helps mother in attending to poultry and sheep, searches for straying sheep or chicken outside. [231]

Daughters of widowed women, or men who are not actually engaged in farming, gather fuel from along the roads. [818] [312]

Brings home 'clay' from the Nile or the field to help mother in building or repairing the oven, the pigeon-cote, the fireplace and the earthen store for seeds.

Carries corn on her head to the mill. [482]

FROM TWELVE TO SIXTEEN

Fertilizer-fetching is the main responsibility. Father is responsible for the work on the land, while son is responsible for carrying fertilizer from the hill.

Rears with special attention animals allocated to him: calf, small camel . . . as an investment for his marriage-payment.

Makes ropes by twisting fibre of the palm trunk.

883

'Sea' is one of her main responsibilities, which means water-fetching from Nile mainly at night. [241]

Occasionally takes women's washing as well as her own to be washed in the Nile [296] [231]

Sieves flour, sews and cooks.

Heats the oven, kneads and bakes. [422]

Hair-delousing. [515]

Wool spinning and yarning.

Makes plate and dish covers out of palm leaves, and dolls to ornament her future house. [283] [285]

Errand-going decreases to the minimum.

May get married before sixteen. [582]

[1] This is the period where compulsory schooling has interfered with the traditional activities of children. 871

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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few city-dwellers, as most of the products of the modern schools, are seldom acquainted with the names of these months, their functional importance is obvious to the greater part of the Egyptian rural population.

For the village boys, the memorizing of these month-names is greatly helped by the descriptive rhyming phrases that connect them with such significant climatic changes or agricultural events. The table opposite shows the Coptic months and the corresponding dates of the European calendar, as well as the Lunar calendar.

The following are the rhyming phrases connected with the Coptic months. It is to be noticed that they are connected either with the climatic conditions or with wheat in winter, or a kind of millet (different from the one grown after perennial irrigation was introduced) called 'damirl' and which used to be grown in autumn, lasting for two months.

Toot:
He is a fool who expects flood in Toot.

Babah:
If the millet's cob is not fully ripe in this month, not much harvest is to be expected.

Hatoor:
Hatoor calls the cold to commence.

Kiyah:
Compels the barking dog to sleep.[1]

Toobah:
In Toobah my ankle has never been wetted by water.[2]

Amsheer:
The first ten of Amsheer makes one's skin shiver (chopped).

Baramhat:
One can enter the field and get corn (corn begins to ripen).

Baramoudah:
The corn is gathered into heaps.

Bashans:
The chaff is taken away from the sun (loaded home).

Baoonah:
Full of hardship, and it is not advisable to eat eggs or fish (due probably to the excessive heat).

Abeeb:
One does not find it difficult to get dates.

Misri:
Between Misri and Abeeb, send they joy-cries, O beloved (the peak of the Nile flood). This applies, of course, to the days of the basin irrigation,

[1] One of the boys added that in Kiyah the sleeping dog brings his head nearer to his tail.
[2] This is the period of drought called 'gafaf' during which the government allows no water to remain in the canals so that they may be cleaned out; thus water is not available for irrigation.

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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

347 Shops of different kinds are situated in the wider parts of lanes,
with open fronts which can be closed with wooden shutters when
the owners are away (Fig. 11). Through the open shop-fronts the
463 tailors are to be seen making *galābīb* (long blouses; singular,
[294] *gallabīyeh*) for their customers, and in some villages one may
[326] watch the coppersmiths manufacturing bowls and jars. The
vessels are hammered into shape over iron bars fixed in the
ground. The iron bar is bent over at a right angle at the top,
and flattened out so as to form a kind of anvil, on which the bowl
or other vessel is beaten into shape.

363 443 291 342

FIG. 11. A VILLAGE STREET WITH SHOPS AND BUTCHERS' BOOTHS

352 461 031 788 Benches of bricks and mud (*maṣāṭib*, singular *maṣṭabeh*) are found outside some of the houses, and on them is usually to be seen a collection of children, fowls, goats, and even sheep, in happy promiscuity. Or perhaps a *maṣṭabeh* may be occupied solely by an old man, spinning wool, or holding a rosary in his hand and slowly passing the beads between his fingers and thumb (Fig. 12).

243 465 During harvest-time the swishing of the sticks as men and women beat the grain from the bundles of corn which they have received as wages for work in the fields,[1] resounds along the village streets.

312 823 755 The Yūsuf Canal (Figs. 4 and 13) flows past a village in which I have frequently resided, and there is a good deal of folklore connected with it. The water is believed to possess curative properties

[1] See Chapter X.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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for sore eyes, fever, and other complaints. The canal, according to the peasants, was made in a miraculous way by the patriarch Joseph (Yūsuf). They relate that he started one day to walk from Deirūṭ, where the Baḥr el-Yūsuf (Canal of Joseph) diverges from the Ibrahimīyeh Canal, and as he went he trailed his stick behind him. Water began to flow along the course marked by his stick until he came to the lake Ḳarūn, at the north-west side of Fayūm Province, and into this lake the numerous streams in which the Baḥr terminates disgorge themselves. Owing to this belief regarding the origin of the canal, its water is believed to contain much *barakeh* (blessing, healing virtues, good luck), and accordingly, on the day of *Shemm en-Nesīm*, which coincides with the Coptic Easter Monday, the men make a point of bathing in the canal, for on this occasion the water is believed to be endowed with *barakeh* to a special degree.

FIG. 12. A MAN WITH A ROSARY SITTING ON A MAṢṬABEH

The following is another tradition connected with the Baḥr el-Yūsuf.[1] It is a translation from an Arabic manuscript. "Joseph, to whom may Allah show mercy and grant peace, when he was Prime Minister of Egypt and high in favour with Raiyan, his

[1] Quoted by Sir R. H. Brown, K.C.M.G., R.E., in *The Fayûm and Lake Moeris* (London, 1892), pp. 22–24.

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sovereign, after that he was more than a hundred years old, became an object of envy to the favourites of the King and the puissant seigneurs of the Court of Memphis, on account of the great power which he wielded and the affection entertained for him by his monarch. They accordingly thus addressed the King: 'Great King, Joseph is now very old; his knowledge has diminished; his beauty has faded; his judgment is unsound; his sagacity has failed.'

"The King said: 'Set him a task which shall serve as a test'

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137
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FIG. 13. A VIEW OF THE BAḤR EL-YŪSUF, WITH A SHĀDŪF AND WATER-WHEEL ON THE RIGHT

At that time el-Fayūm was called el-Hun, or 'the Marsh.' It served as a waste basin for the waters of Upper Egypt, which flowed in and out unrestrained. The courtiers, having taken council together what to propose to the King, gave this reply to Pharaoh: 'Lay the royal commands upon Joseph that he shall direct the water of the Nile from el-Hun and drain it, so as to give you a new province and an additional source of revenue.'

"The King assented, and, summoning Joseph to his presence, said: 'You know how dearly I love my daughter, and you see that the time has arrived in which I ought to carve an estate for her out of the crown lands, and give her a separate establishment,

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THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Little girls have a perfectly free life until they reach marriageable age, when their freedom is somewhat more restricted. After marriage they are still more secluded, but the degree of seclusion varies, being rather stricter among the better-class peasants than among those of lower social status. Among the latter there may be considerable freedom of intercourse between the sexes. It must be remembered that there are quite definite social grades among the *felläḥin*, the lines of demarcation being very strongly em-

FIG. 14. A MOTHER WITH HER CHILDREN

phasized. For instance, in a family well known to me the women are not allowed to speak freely to the men, and, with the exception of the elderly mother, none of the females are allowed to enter a room in which male visitors may be seated, and even the mother does not appear unless there is something which renders her presence necessary. One of the women in this family is a widow of about thirty years of age, possibly a little older, and her brother objects to her even being seen walking in the streets of their village, except when she goes, accompanied by her mother, to get the water for household use or for some other necessary purpose. He told me that if he allowed her to be seen walking about in public

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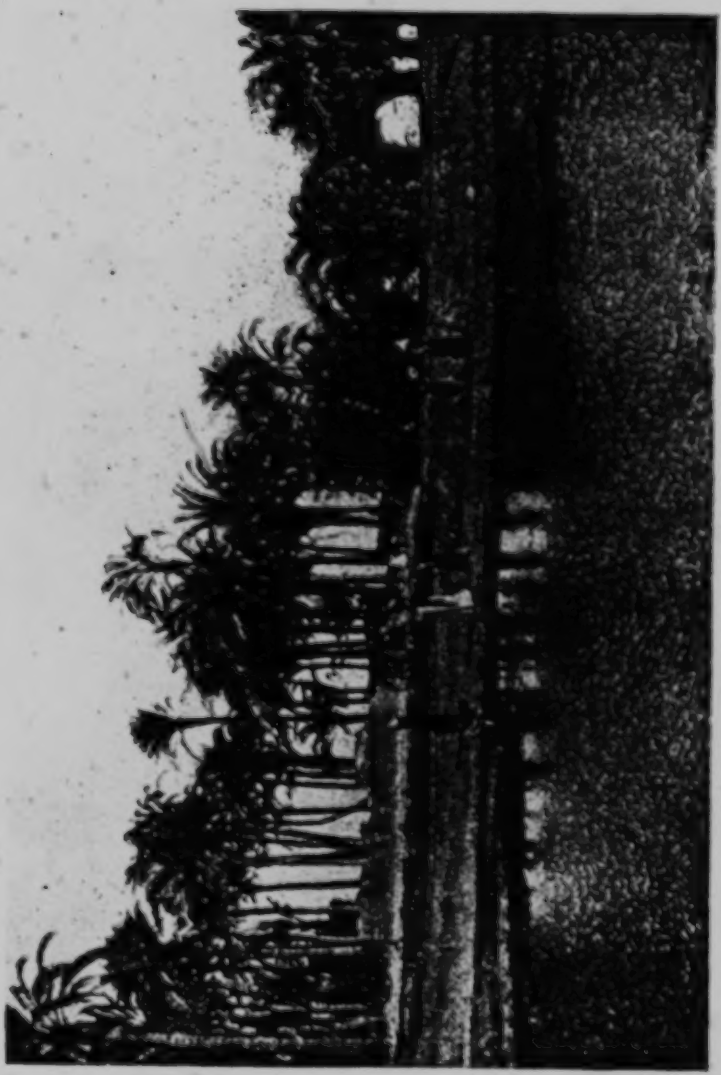

FIG. 16. WOMEN CARRYING WATER-POTS ON THEIR HEADS

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BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

the *ukht* only is attached to each individual, whether male or female. According to my informants among the *fellāḥīn*, the *ukht* of each person lives underground,[1] though it comes up on occasions. It resembles in character the human being to whom it is attached. Thus, if a man or woman is good his or her *ukht* is good, if bad the *ukht* is bad also. It is quite distinct an entity from the *ḳarīn* and *ḳarīneh*.[2]

The following incidents happened last year in connexion with a woman and her husband, both of whom are well known to me. The woman in question was expecting to become a mother, and she and her husband were having a meal together one day when a cat came into the house and tried to eat some of their food. The woman hit the cat, which disappeared immediately. Being surprised at this sudden and miraculous disappearance of the animal, the woman consulted a well-known female magician who lives in her village. This magician got into touch with the "people beneath the earth," who informed her that the *ukht* of the woman mentioned above was angry with her, and wanted to know why she had hit her when she had come to her house in the form of a cat. The woman then said that she was very sorry, but she had not known that it was her *ukht* who had come in that form. The *ukht* said, "Why did you hit me? Did you not want me to eat?" She also complained that the woman to whom she was *ukht* had no *ḳūz* for her *zīr*, so that she (the *ukht*) could not drink when she came to the house. (A *ḳūz* is a large tin mug, and anyone who wants a drink dips it into the *zīr*—a large pottery jar, often kept in a special kind of cupboard, and containing the household water—and drinks from it.) The magician told the woman that she must buy a *ḳūz* and put it with the *zīr* in the cupboard, which was to be locked so that no one could get at it, and the *ukht* could drink without being disturbed.

It also transpired that the woman's *ukht* and also the *ukht* of her husband were both very jealous, because the man and his wife were always laughing together. The two *ikhwāt* (plural of *ukht*) said they did not like it, and that if this merriment between the pair continued all their children should die. The woman was to laugh only occasionally, and then all would be well. To my own know-

[1] See also pp. 69, 184, 186, 227.
[2] See my article on the subject, "The Ḳarîn and Ḳarîneh," in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. lvi, January-June, 1926, pp. 163-169.

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and on the exact site of the crime. Moreover, the same number of knots was tied in the handkerchief used by the avenger as had been tied in the handkerchief used by the original murderer.

On another occasion the train in which I was travelling stopped close to a certain village in Middle Egypt. I noticed that the place was in great commotion; crowds of people had collected in the streets, and there were two or three motors drawn up, evidently belonging to Government officials. In a palm-grove opposite the village were groups of people, mostly women, seated round objects covered up with black cloaks such as are often worn by the men. Presently my servant came to the door of my carriage to tell me what was the matter. His information, collected from various persons on the spot, was practically the same as what I was told later by the officials themselves. It seems that in the village in question there is a long-standing feud between two families, one of which is weak, the other strong. About eight months previously the strong family had fought with the weaker one, and had either killed or severely wounded—I forget which—some of its members. The weak family was not in a position to take immediate revenge, but bided its time, determining to retaliate sooner or later. During the night before my visit fifteen members of the more powerful family had been out in their fields, as water had been turned on for irrigation purposes. It is always necessary on these occasions to see that the water is conducted into the proper channels, and also that no one steals it by altering its course. The men thus employed were widely separated from each other, and during their watch they all fell asleep. The weaker family knew that this might well happen and so give them the long-desired opportunity of taking their revenge. A number of them, therefore, set off from the village at night, and, creeping up to their sleeping enemies, beat them so severely with *nabābīt* that those they did not kill outright they injured so terribly that they were not expected to live—I never heard definitely how many actually were killed, though one rumour, happily an exaggeration, I believe, put the number as high as twelve.

The law of blood-revenge is one of the greatest obstacles to justice with which the police officials have to contend. It is most difficult to obtain evidence, because the witnesses know that, should what they say result in a criminal's conviction, his relatives will certainly take revenge. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that

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CHAPTER X

AGRICULTURE AND HARVEST RITES

THE wealth and prosperity of Egypt is, and always has been, dependent upon the produce of the soil, and the peasants are before everything else agriculturalists, as is also indicated by the Egyptian Arabic word for peasant—*fellāḥ* (plural *fellāḥīn*), meaning one who digs or tills. The peasants, most of whom are quite illiterate, are remarkably clever agriculturalists, and every young boy is well versed in all that pertains to the cultivation of the soil. Their methods are, for the most part, very primitive, though, of course, the present system of storing water and of distributing it over various districts has been adopted comparatively recently, and to maintain it a number of highly trained engineers are required. This book is not concerned with these modern developments, which, indeed, lie beyond the scope of anthropology, but with the ordinary work in the fields, where ancient methods and ancient implements are still largely employed, and ancient customs are still observed.

The cultivated lands in Egypt lie along either bank of the river, without any apparent boundaries, for there are no hedges to divide the fields as in England. To the eye of the ordinary traveller there is nothing to indicate where one man's property ends and another's begins. The fields are broken up into small squares, separated from each other by ridges of earth and narrow trenches. When water is distributed over a given area it is conducted through the trenches into the square plots by making an opening through the ridges which surround them. When the plots have received their due allowance of water the openings are built up again and the stream is directed to another portion of the land.

The greater number of the peasants own or hire small plots which are marked off one from the other by boundary stones stuck into the ground at intervals of six feet or more. Many a village quarrel has arisen over these stones, the removal of a neighbour's landmark being a constant cause of disturbance. If a man, for

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

instance, thinks he would like to add to his own property by stealing a portion of his neighbour's he will surreptitiously shift his boundary stones farther on to the adjoining land. This is, of course, quickly detected by the man whose land has been encroached upon, and a bitter dispute will follow, which may end in a violent quarrel.

The plough which is in common use at the present day is a primitive, but quite adequate, machine (Fig. 97). It is made entirely of wood, with the exception of the share, which is tipped with iron. It is generally drawn by oxen, but in Upper Egypt I have seen more than one plough with a camel and a donkey yoked together, a somewhat incongruous pair! The peasant follows on foot, guiding the plough, and usually singing as he works. Except during the inundation the work in the fields is incessant, for, owing to the very fertile soil, one crop can follow another in quick succession.

FIG. 97. A PLOUGH AS USED TO-DAY

The watering of the fields is very strenuous work, the commonest machine used for this purpose being the *shādūf* (see Fig. 13, right, and Fig. 108), a primitive water-hoist. It consists of two upright wooden posts, or pillars, made of mud and *būṣ*, connected by a horizontal bar, across which is slung another bar, or a stout branch of a tree, weighted at one end with mud and stones, while from the other end is suspended a leather or basket-work bucket. The man working the *shādūf* pulls down this bucket into the water (either river or canal), and, when it is full, allows the weighted end to raise it to the level of the land. He then pours the water into a prepared channel, through which it flows in the required direction.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

AGRICULTURE AND HARVEST RITES

If the land to be irrigated is much above water-level two or three of these *shawādīf* (plural of *shādūf*) are worked one above the other.

The men thus engaged usually sing at their task, some of their songs being very melancholy, and descriptive of their hard and laborious toil. One of them runs thus:

Shawādīf,
Their ropes are of palm-fibre
And their pails are of goatskins.
And it was in ancient times that *shawādīf* were invented
By the blessed Ṣāliḥ Zabādi.

The ropes referred to are those by which the bucket is suspended from the end of the weighted branch which acts as a lever. The name of the supposed inventor is, of course, mythological.

The following is a lament on the hard labour involved in the working of a *shādūf*:

Hast Thou resolved upon strangling me, O God?
Loosen the noose!
No mother weeps [for me],
No aunt,
No sister![1]

Another method of raising the water is by means of a water-wheel round the circumference of which pottery jars are attached. Another small wheel with cogs is attached to the same axis as the larger wheel, and into it fit the cogs of a large horizontal wheel. When this is made to revolve the two vertical wheels are set in motion. A long pole is attached to the horizontal wheel, and to it an ox, cow, or buffalo, or even a camel, is yoked and driven round and round by a man or boy. The animal is usually blind-folded to prevent it from becoming giddy. The groaning and creaking of the turning water-wheel form, to my mind, a most soothing sound.[2] Yet another contrivance for raising the water to the level of the fields is the Archimedean screw, depicted in Fig. 98.

During harvest-time every available man, woman, and child is employed in the fields; but before any of the corn is cut some of the villagers go into the fields and pluck the finest ears by hand. These are plaited into a special form, and this object, called the

[1] See H. Schaefer, *The Songs of an Egyptian Peasant*, translated by F. H. Breasted (Leipzig, 1904), pp. 43 f.

[2] For excellent photographs of a *shādūf* and a water-wheel see *op. cit.*, pp. 45 and 107.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

'bride of the corn' (*'arūset el-ḥamḥ*), is used as a charm. One may be suspended over the house-door as an antidote to the evil eye; another may be hung up in the room containing the stores of food, as a charm to ensure abundance. Many tradesmen hang such objects in their shop-windows, believing that this will bring them plenty of customers. Again, in some parts of Egypt the 'bride of the corn' is temporarily placed on the heaps of grain after the winnowing is completed, as a charm to secure a good harvest the following year. Sometimes the grain from these heads of corn is extracted and mixed with the next year's sowing. The 'bride' may be left hanging till it is replaced at the next harvest, or, again, it may be allowed to remain in its place until it falls to pieces (Fig. 99).

FIG. 98. THE ARCHIMEDEAN SCREW

Before the field is cut a certain number of people are given presents of corn by the owner. These gifts of the firstfruits are bestowed on some of the poorest people in the village, as well as on the barber, the *mueddin* (the man who chants the call to prayer from the mosque), the *zummāreh*-player, the carpenter, and the *fuḳahā*—the last-mentioned being poor men who recite the Ḳorān in mosques, in private houses, at funeral ceremonies, and at the periodical visits to the grave (see pp 112, 114 f., 117 ff., and Fig. 100).

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

CHAPTER XIII

THE EVIL EYE AND OTHER SUPERSTITIONS

IN the preceding chapter I referred to the neglected condition of the children, partly due to the women's utter ignorance of hygiene and also to the fact that facilities for keeping themselves and their children clean are practically non-existent in Egyptian villages. My readers must bear in mind that all the water, for whatever purpose it may be required, has to be fetched by the women from the Nile, or a canal, or even some dirty pool, all of which may be situated at some distance from their homes. But the main reason for the children being so dirty is the belief in, and dread of, the evil eye, or eye of envy, which is to be found practically all over the world. It has not even died out in modern England, where, to my own knowledge, it exists in parts of the eastern counties, and it may possibly exist in other counties also. To the Egyptian peasants the fear of the evil eye is a very real terror from infancy to old age, and on that account it is considered unwise to let a child look too beautiful in case some one may cast the eye of envy over it. Certainly the dirt allowed to accumulate on some of these poor little specimens of humanity should afford a very effective protection against any and every evil eye!

To counteract this baneful influence innumerable methods are adopted, of which I will give a few examples.

If after a woman has received a visit from friends and neighbours her child shows signs of illness she immediately thinks that one of her guests has cast the evil eye on it. She accordingly cuts out a human figure in paper (Fig. 132), and then takes a pin, repeats the name of each of her late visitors in turn, pricking the paper figure at the mention of each name. When she has repeated all the names she sets the figure on fire, saying to her child, "Look at it, look at it!" When it is consumed, she takes a piece of alum, rubs it on the child's forehead, and then places it in a fire, over which she passes the child seven times. When the alum is burnt out, leaving only a charred substance, the mother takes it out of

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

SUPERSTITIONS

It is a common belief in Egypt, as, indeed, in some other countries also, that the soul can leave the body during sleep. It is therefore considered unsafe to wake anyone suddenly, for fear the soul should not have time to return to the body of the sleeper. Such awakening must be done very slowly, so as to give the soul ample time to return. I am not quite clear as to what happens if the soul does not get back in time; probably the sleeper's personality changes, or he becomes imbecile.

There is a strong belief among the peasants that the dead can appear to the living, speak with them, and issue commands. The strength of this belief can be seen in connexion with the sheikh cult, discussed in Chapter XV. There are a number of ghost stories current in the country, the ghost being usually regarded as the dead man's *'afrīt*, which, as will be seen in the following chapter, is not the soul, but a separate entity. The two following ghost stories may interest my readers, the second ghost having only just begun to ' walk ' a week or so before I arrived at the dead man's village.

The engine which controls the machinery for irrigating the fields of the rich *'omdeh* (headman) of a certain village is worked by steam, and the boiler is covered with a large sheet of iron. The steam is shut off late every evening, at about seven-thirty, and is turned on again at daybreak. To turn it on a man has to stand on the sheet of iron above the reservoir. One day the son of the assistant engineer made a mistake, saying that he had turned on the steam when he had not done so. The consequence was that more was generated than the boiler could contain, and it promptly exploded. An unfortunate man who was standing on the iron sheet was crushed against the ceiling and killed instantly. One night later a man who was sleeping in the engine-room with some of his fellow-workmen began to call out. His companions were aroused from sleep by his cries, and asked him what was the matter. He told them that he had seen the man who had been killed, and that he was wailing and crying "*Akh! akh! akh!*" ("Alas! alas! alas!"), and also had tried to poke out his (the speaker's) eyes with two of his fingers. Since this incident a great explosion is heard in the engine-room every night at twelve o'clock. The first time it was heard the guards and other people thought that there had been another accident, but, when they went to look, nothing had occurred, and the engine was not working. The

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

Before people take up residence in a newly built house, or complete a well for a water-wheel, or use new machinery for irrigation or grinding corn, an ox or a sheep, or, if the people are poor, a fowl, must be killed on the threshold of the house, or close to the engine, or inside the well before the water-level is reached. This is done in case these spots may be haunted by *'afārīt*, who will trouble the owners if not first appeased by the blood of a sacrifice.

Within a year three people were killed by the irrigation machinery

FIG. 137. THE MOTHER OF THE BOY WHO WAS KILLED WAILING OUTSIDE THE 'OMDEH'S ENGINE-HOUSE

belonging to the *'omdeh* of the village mentioned on p. 235 (see also Fig. 137). One, a woman, was killed not long before I arrived there, a boy was caught in the machinery and killed during my visit, and a man was killed in a similar way just after I had left. This *'omdeh* had made no sacrifice before using the engine, so a number of the villagers went to him and demanded that he should kill an ox on the spot. This he did, about a month after I had gone, and some of the blood of the animal was sprinkled on the engine. Apparently this has appeased the *'afārīt*, for I have heard of no accidents since the sacrifice was made!

There is an old Copt in that village, considerably over ninety

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

remove it, or its *'afrīt* would for ever haunt the house. As it was a hopeless case I gave my servant a revolver and told him to shoot the dog. This he did, but he first took it away to a more distant

While I was in Egypt in 1925 a poor man who came to trade in the village in which I was staying was drowned. He had gone to the Baḥr el-Yūsuf canal to perform his ablutions before his morning prayers, but the water was deeper than he thought, and he was unable to swim. No one was near at the time, it being very early in the morning. As he did not return people went down to the canal to look for him, and found his clothes on the bank. A large crowd collected, but nothing was done till early in the afternoon. The officials had been informed of the accident, but no doubt more pressing business detained them, and in any case they had to come from some distance. I went down and mixed with the crowd. The man's wife, mother, and little son were standing close to the water's edge, accompanied by numbers of sympathizers. The women were gesticulating and wailing, as they always do after a death, and were waving the blue and black handkerchiefs used on such occasions. "O my father! O camel of the house!"[1] they cried. A boat was manned by two or three men with a line, to which large fishing-hooks were attached, by means of which they hoped to hook up the body. They had been searching one portion of the canal in this way for some time, with no result, when I suggested that they should try another part, in the direction of which the current was flowing. They followed my advice, and very soon found the body. It was placed on the shore and immediately surrounded by a large crowd, which, after some time, dispersed, and then I saw the mother and wife of the dead man, one seated at the head and the other at the feet. I was strongly reminded of the ancient representations of Isis and Nephthys bewailing the dead Osiris. After this accident I was told by some of the villagers that no woman would go alone to fill her water-jar at that spot for fear of the drowned man's *'afrīt*, which would always remain in the water. It might be a good *'afrīt*, and then it would do no injury; but—who could tell?—it might be bad!

A few years ago some women in a neighbouring village had gone

[1] The camel, being a beast of burden and a means of livelihood among the peasants, typifies the breadwinner of the family.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

'AFĀRĪT

A few years ago some women in a neighboring village had gone to the Gizeh canal to fill their water-jars. One of them, thinking it would be pleasant to have a bathe, for the weather was very hot, took off her clothes and went right into the water, dancing about with her water-jar on her head. Suddenly she cried out and started wailing, as she felt that she was being drawn under the water. No one made any effort to save her, as they said that an *'afrīt* of some drowned person had caught her by her hair and was dragging her down. They believed that if one of them attempted to save her he or she would probably be caught also—and, besides, the *'afrīt* wanted her and must have her!

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

The boy replied, "Because you have not built me a large tomb, and if you do not do so now I will go away to another village."

"O my beloved son," said his father, "to-morrow morning I will begin to build a fine tomb for you."

Young ʿAli held a paper in his hand, and he now presented this to his father, telling him that on it were written full directions for the building of the tomb, together with a specification of the exact

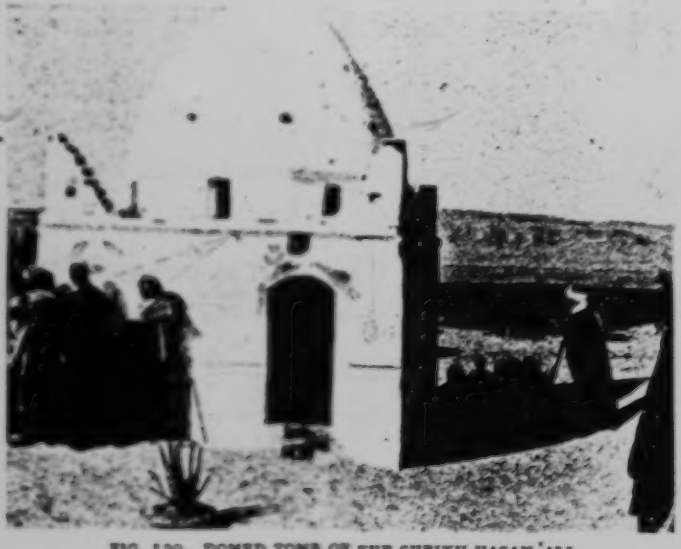

FIG. 139. DOMED TOMB OF THE SHEIKH ḤASAN ʿALI

spot where it was to be built and also as to where would be found a well of water, the locality of which was hitherto unknown.

The tomb was built with all speed, the workmen following the instructions written on the paper presented to old ʿAli by his son. A well was sunk on the spot indicated, and the water from it is excellent. The father states most emphatically that he was wide awake when his son appeared to him. When I questioned old ʿAli as to what he had done with the paper he told me that it had been lost by the workmen!

A small model of a boat is hung up in the sheikh Ḥasan ʿAli's tomb, as in the tombs of many sheikhs, the boat being called the sheikh's ferry-boat.

The mother of this sheikh, who was very devoted to her son, did

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

The modern *shādūf* (pp. 190 f.) finds its exact counterpart in paintings dating from the New Kingdom (Fig. 180). Wooden *shādūf*-hooks, the hooks from which the leather buckets are hung,

FIG. 178. AN ANCIENT PLOUGH
After Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Nakht at Thebes*, Pl. XVIII.

have been found in graves of the Second to Third Dynasties (*c.* 3000 B.C.).[1]

The object now known as *'arūset el-ḳamḥ*, 'the bride of the corn,' is depicted in several Theban tomb-chapels of the Eighteenth Dynasty,[2] and can possibly be traced back to the Old Kingdom in a different form.[3] It is stated on p. 172 that "in some parts of Egypt 'the bride of the corn' is temporarily placed on the heaps of grain

FIG. 179. AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PLOUGH IN THE BERLIN MUSEUM
After L. Borchardt, *Priestergräber . . . vom Totentempel des Ne-user-rē*, p. 116.

Ne-user-rē (Leipzig, 1908), pp. 165 ff.; A. Wiedemann, *Das alte Ägypten*, p. 24 and note 3.

[1] W. M. F. Petrie, *Tarkhan*, Part I, Pl. X, 6.

[2] W. S. Blackman, *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. viii, pp. 235 ff. and Pls. XXVI–XXIX.

[3] J. Capart, *La mise à mort du dieu en Égypte* (Paris, 1927).

since the last phase of the quaternary period, over the flat edges of its bed, and spread out in ever widening layers across its mouth, encroaching on the sea (*).

E F 133 134

These deposits have created on top of the granite, limestone or sand a layer of black earth, varying in depth between 10 to 30 metres in different regions.

The Nile soil which thus covers the valley consists of both coarse and colloidal clay, with an admixture of various salts. It is an amalgam of finely ground particles carried down by the Blue and White Niles. The composition of this arable soil, unlike that of most agricultural countries, is substantially the same everywhere. It has a high mineral content, which, as we shall see later, has an important influence on the food of the fellah.

This soil, once deposited, is continually irrigated and enriched by the Nile, by means of either flooding or canalisation, but always under the control of man. The time-honoured system of basin irrigation, still in use over a million feddans, consists in discharging the water at flood-time through small channels on to *hôds* — vast areas of land surrounded by dykes. The land absorbs water until it is saturated; then the remainder slowly drains away, after depositing a layer of the fine silt with which the water was laden before flowing into the basins. Each feddan thus receives about 7,000 cubic metres of water, which leave 8 or 9 tons of silt. Immediately after the water is drained off (about November) the crops are sown. They are then left to ripen until harvest-time without needing any further irrigation. The land then lies fallow till the next flood. However, many of those who farm basin land, in order to produce a summer as well as a winter crop, make use of the underground water by means of pumps, which are now so common that they have modified the system of cultivation in these districts.

F 134 312 ● 241

The perennial system of irrigation, introduced in 1840, and made possible through engineering works, of which the most notable is the Aswan Dam, now covers all the Delta and the greater part of Upper Egypt (4,300,000 feddans). The Nile no longer completely floods the land. Its water is stored in reservoirs, then distributed through barrages into a network of canals which water the land throughout the year.

F 312

we shall probably be rather under- than overstating the case if we reckon the agricultural population, which is the subject of our enquiries, at twelve million souls. E F 161 162

Moreover, this population is increasing. Less rapidly, it is true, than that of Cairo, where between 1917 and 1927 the increase was 28%, while in the country it scarcely exceeded 10%. But in the city the rise is largely due to an influx from abroad and from the countryside; in the country it is dependent on the birthrate alone.

Thus the rural density of population is about 1300 persons to the square mile (11). Such a situation is probably without parallel except in Tonkin, where six million peasants live on 5150 square miles, giving a density of 1165, or 93% of the population on 16% of the territory. Of this mass three millions live at a density of 1400, and more than one and a half millions at 2800 (12). F 162

The density of population in the Nile Valley is explained by the concurrence of all the conditions, geographic, economic and social, which favour a high birthrate. The climate is warm, the valley itself is flat, uniform, tractable and strictly defined. There are plentiful food crops which can provide locally for a numerous population; maize, corn, rice, lentils and beans grow throughout the country. F [132 133] 241

The cultivation of cotton necessitates a settled concentration of workers, whose labour may bring considerable profit. The perennial irrigation system on the one hand requires many labourers, and on the other hand, by raising the productivity of the soil, makes it possible for more people to live on it. The soil is divided into many small properties, either rented or privately owned. These small holdings only accentuate the overcrowding which causes them. Help is wanted as cheap as possible; children can provide it. Thus the fellah is forced by the exigencies of the land to have children, and as many as possible. This for him is the meaning of marriage and the family. Where all these conditions exist together, as in the province of Menoufiya in the Upper Delta, where the land has been longest cultivated and irrigated, where cotton is the chief crop and small holdings are the most numerous, a density of over 2,000 to the square mile is to be found (13). F 248 312 F 423 163 464 F [248 162]

Where favourable conditions are fewer the density grows less. This is so in the South, in the districts above F 162 194

and below the cataract of Aswan, where the land is less rich and is still under the system of basin irrigation and large, semi-feudal estates. In the province of Aswan there are only 305,195 inhabitants to 224,000 feddans. This gives about 800 to the square mile. But the lowest rural density occurs in the lake region of the North, where the lands are low-lying, salt and marshy. Near Kafr-el-Dawêr, not far from Alexandria, it is only about 500 to the square mile.

This uneven distribution, though it may be explained by physical conditions, is not finally determined by them. In the outlying districts which we have just mentioned the full capacity of the land is far from being reached.

There is still another factor of prime importance to be considered — habit. Time as well as place has its influence on human psychology. The fellah has a stable, unadventurous disposition. He stays tied to his native village, which represents for him the security of both past and present. Unlike the Palestinian or Syrian peasant, he never emigrates to try his luck. He will never even take a job in another province where there is a demand for labour, unless he is pressed into it by force. If he does leave his native *balad*, it will not be for another country district, which could never be as good as his own, or afford him a better life or income; he will make for the town, and by preference for Cairo. So migration is comparatively rare, and owners of newly reclaimed land (*barâri*) find great difficulty in securing sufficient hands, despite the good pay and housing they offer.

Rural, gregarious, stay-at-home; such is the Egyptian people in its dominant characteristics. These qualities have contributed as much as the needs and possibilities of the soil to cause the over-population of the country.

Over-population, however, is a relative term, and there are a number of factors to be taken into account.

The adoption of perennial irrigation has made possible a more intensive exploitation of the most fertile land. Thus the area actually cultivated remained more or less stable between 1930 and 1940 at an average of 5,353,500 feddans; however, since much of this land produced two crops in the course of a year, the crop area, as it is called, rose to close on eight and a half million feddans.

423 425 426 Small properties do not result solely from the subdivision of inheritances, but also from the acquisition of tiny plots as money becomes available. The fellah is so hungry for land that he buys it, more often than not, at a ruinous price; this is also partly because he buys only a few *kirats* at a time. In order to pay for it he supplements his savings by contracting a debt.

423 425 426 556 The demand is so high that the lots are sold for the best price offered, and, in forced sales, by auction. Here is an example of what may happen. Ten feddans are on sale for L.E. 400. A dozen fellaheen join together to buy them at that price, and divide them up among themselves. But a rich landowner of the neighbourhood gets wind of the business. He arrives a few hours before the sale and sits down at a café in full view of everybody. He boasts openly that he is ready to buy the lot at no matter what price. The fellaheen, threatened with disappointment, come up and beg him to withdraw, offering money as compensation. He lets them plead, bargains with them, then pockets his gains and leaves the village, in high glee at the success of his stratagem, which he will repeat when opportunity offers. The fellaheen, who have given him L.E. 10 for nothing, think the bargain good.

The Government

656 [312] The Government, by its control of the land, and still more of the water, is supreme over capital and labour, and over the peasant class. As master of the irrigation system, it assumes for the fellah all the power and importance of the Nile. The more the State regulates the river, the greater the dependence on it of both soil and men of the soil.

As Egypt is an agricultural country, almost every Government organisation is, in the long run, giving orders to the fellah. In industry and in the large towns, the Government willingly entrusts the public services to private enterprise. In agricultural matters, on the contrary, it assumes many functions which in other countries are undertaken by private persons. So much so that for the rural population the Government is a kind of overriding providence, while the fellah is regarded by the Government as a helpless child, who has constantly to be ordered about and protected from his own ignorance.

231 on about 18 *kirats* of *berseem*, while in summer it consumes daily about 10 or 12 okes of fodder (*tibn*) consisting of straw, bean-stalks and cotton-seed cake. Provided its moist diet (containing 87% water) is not changed too suddenly to the dry diet of the five summer months, it will give about four thousand *rotls* of milk a year to the cow's two thousand. [262] This milk is richer than cow's milk, containing 7% of fatty substances as against 3-5%. The meat of the *gamoossa*, also, is better than veal.

231 241 All these advantages would make cattle-rearing and dairy-farming very profitable in Egypt, but the fellah does not go in for cattle-rearing; it is not to his interest to fatten his *gamoossa*, which can tackle the work of tillage and water-raising — and these are his chief needs — on a modicum of fodder. The cost of a *gamoossa* is between L.E. 12 and L.E. 25.

231 The Egyptian donkey is a much hardier beast than the horse, as the *gamoossa* is than the cow. It is also an economical animal to keep, having no unusual needs. In the Delta the commonest is the *baladi* donkey, generally black, which stands about 40 inches high, carries up to 200 lbs. and costs from L.E. 2 to L.E. 3. The white or grey ass of Upper Egypt, called 'Syrian', the kind which tourists ride around the Pyramids, is taller and more handsome. It stands up to four feet high and may be worth as much as L.E. 20.

The camel and the mule, being less adaptable, are little used by the fellaheen.

THE WORK OF IRRIGATION

241 312 When the soil has been prepared, the next business of the fellah is to water and fertilise it. He does not have to wait anxiously for rain, like the peasant of Transjordan. The water is beside him in the river or the canal, but it has to be raised and distributed. Until he has irrigated his furrows, the fellah cannot rest.

312 Like the arteries and veins of a mighty body, 12,000 miles of canals distribute the waters of the Nile in due proportion to all the crops. 5,000 miles of other canals drain the surplus water back into the Nile, or into the lakes.

At the season called the *gaffaf*, in January [21], double gangs are to be seen working with their hands, one on the bank, the other down in the canal bed. Those below pull up the clods of mud and weeds and throw them to those on the bank, who catch them and fling them yet further aside. 312 [805]

In order that this canal system may do its work and the water reach the field, the fellah has to make a network of runnels which will bring the water to his crops. He is ceaselessly occupied in cleaning and maintaining these smaller channels. 312 461 241

When the turn comes for his field to receive its water—five days out of ten in flood time, and six days out of eighteen at low Nile — the fellah stays up night after night in order to lose none of his water ration.

When the water level is high he watches it flow through the channels, and has only to clear away any obstacles. But the water is at low level for 50 to 200 days a year, according to the different regions, and then he has to raise it by hand. Here again he has no modern machinery, but uses the simplest apparatus, as old as the history of Egypt.

When the water level is only about two feet below his field, he has two ways of raising it to the thirsty soil. The first way has now become almost obsolete.

FIRST METHOD

Two men stand face to face on a ledge cut in the bank at water level. With four hempen or palm-fibre ropes they support a wide shallow vessel about 18 ins. in diameter and 10 ins. deep. It is usually made of light basket-work and more or less waterproof. 241 312

Their first movement is to bend slightly down, turning towards the water, then dip their basket and fill it. With a second movement they straighten themselves, turn to the field, and, raising the vessel by a simultaneous movement of their forearms, empty it out into the mouth of the irrigation channel.

This work, which is performed with clockwork regularity, brings into play mainly the muscles of the trunk and the arms. It is very fatiguing and the strongest men cannot bear it for more than three hours at a time. Accordingly two pairs work turn and turn about. [461]

241 312 It has been calculated that by this method little more than 200 cubic feet of water, or enough for about one acre, can be raised in a day of twelve hours. Such a yield bears no reasonable proportion to the effort exerted, but the instrument is extremely cheap. As long as poverty remains, such methods will continue in use.

This method is called *nattâla*. It was already known to the fellaheen of Ancient Egypt [22] and is used by Japanese peasants, for example on Shikoku.

Second Method

One or two men crouch at the water's edge, turning and turning the crank handle of a wooden cylinder, which reaches from water level to the mouth of the runnel. The water rises spirally inside this cylinder, which is about 18 ins. across. This is the *tambour* or Archimedean screw, a wooden cylinder hooped with iron and about six or nine feet in length, according as it is turned by one or two men. The spiral is fixed between the inside wall and an iron axis, one end of which is bent into a crank, while the other turns on a stake fixed under water.

The *tambour* can irrigate two or three times as much as a *nattâla*, but it costs more and is heavier to work. Moreover, since it requires the continual use of the forearm, it is very much more tiring. Nevertheless it is still much in use, and may frequently be seen.

These two kinds of water-lifting machinery are practicable when the water level is not very low, but sometimes water has to be sought three, six or even thirty feet below the level of the field to be irrigated.

The easiest thing would be to instal a pumping engine. There are many of these on the large estates, but none on small properties; for as the fellaheen are numerous and conservative, poor in money and rich in time, this "convenience" does not commend itself to them. They solved the watering problem ages ago in a way which matches their means, and they feel no need to desert their present system for one which may possibly be better, but which is as yet new and untried.

[181 183]

To raise water from a depth of more than three feet the fellah uses a method as primitive as it is simple. He plants

in the earth, at the water's edge, two stakes about five feet high and a yard apart. When wood is scarce, these two pillars are made of cane or maize stalks daubed over with mud. They are joined at the top by a horizontal bar, like the crossbar of a goalpost. At the middle of this crossbar is balanced a lever more or less straight and about ten feet long. Its shorter arm bears a heavy rock or a great lump of dried mud, and at the end of the longer arm hang two or three yards of rope carrying a bucket, leather basket or old petrol can. This apparatus is placed in the same axis as the channel to be filled.

The fellah stands on a platform made halfway up the bank and pulls down the balanced pole until the bucket dips into the water and fills itself. A slight upward push, helped by the counterweight, brings it just above the runnel, into which it is emptied. All these movements are slow and rhythmic, sometimes accompanied by a droning chant. Their variety might seem to lessen the effort, and yet the fellah finds this task more gruelling than any other. This is the impression one would gather from the melancholy tone of his chant, and it is confirmed by those who have had the patience to collect the words of such songs ([23]).

By the end of a twelve-hour day two fellaheen working alternately in two- or three-hour shifts may succeed in watering about 1/8 acre of cultivated land. One apparatus of this kind suffices for the cultivation of a feddan. The water may be taken from a well or a pool.

This method is widespread amongst the poor peasantry of the East and Far East, especially the Arabs. But the system originated in Egypt. It may be seen depicted on the oldest bas-reliefs, and nowhere else is it so much in use.

The *shadûf*, as it is called, may be used in combination. In the region of Qena and Dendera, in Upper Egypt, you may still see sets of two, three or four of these apparatus used together or in series, to raise the water from a depth. But when the level is very low the *saqia* is more often used.

The *saqia* is really a machine, though clumsy and primitive. It is made from acacia or sycamore wood and driven not by manpower but by beasts.

The great horizontal wheel, turned anti-clockwise by a harnessed ox or donkey, engages with its rough cogs a vertical

244 wheel carrying a long chain of pots which move mouth down-
312 ward into the water to fill, and then tip out their water into the channel as they arrive at the top. The *saqia* and the Archimedean screw have been continuously in use since the times of the Ptolemies.

[471 A *saqia*, costing as it does from L.E. 10 to L.E. 20,
476] according to its depth, is often the common property of several families. Each family in turn brings its own beast to draw water, and the work goes on without any break. One feddan can be irrigated in this way in 24 hours, and one *saqia* can supply five feddans.

The fellah's task is to goad the animal, to watch the turning of the wheel and the flow of water, and to avoid wastage on the way to the field, which may be anything up to three furlongs away. Usually an old man or a child is
[887 left in charge, and as the ungreased wheels continue their
857] ceaseless groaning, the child hums for joy at every movement he makes.

The *saqia*, with variations such as the *taboot* or water-wheel, is found in its thousands all over Egypt. Under the name of *noria* it is used by peasants in Syria, North Africa, Spain, Italy and Greece.

It is clear that the business of watering makes very great demands on the fellah's energy and endurance. Yet he is not satisfied with the strict minimum, and is often accused of giving the soil too much water.

[242] He does not understand that frequent and copious water-
ing raises the underground water-level, and that when this reaches four feet below the surface it stifles the roots and makes the plants turn yellow. He only knows the evil effects of drought. So when his turn comes he never wastes a moment, but gives his crop as much water as he can. To him, lack of water means a failure or at least a low crop; and that means poverty. There is no question that innumerable troubles and anxieties beset the fellah in his efforts to
[656 get the water which he needs for his little plot. The over-
seers of irrigation in the provinces and the watchmen whose duty it is to see to the opening of sluices often disregard the orders and regulations which assure a just supply. In this matter favouritism, injustice and even personal spite are often indulged in with impunity.

243 weeks later the stalks stand higher than a man and are laden with heavy ears. It is time for harvesting. The workers, mainly women and children, pile the stalks into heaps, and then make a first sorting, throwing on one side the ears of maize, on the other the stripped stalks. The yield of a maize crop may be ten or twelve *ardebs* to the feddan, but the average for the country is seven and a half.

The stalks are now set up on end and intertwined to make a sort of circular hedge round the heaps of ears. In this open enclosure the fellaheen work day and night to strip the ears and break out the yellow grain, bigger than peas, [342 372] which they put into baskets and carry home. The stalks are also taken home on donkey back to serve as fuel or reinforcement for the roof. Nothing must be wasted.

C. Wheat

Wheat, on the other hand, has been since antiquity a traditional Egyptian crop. It is nowadays regaining some of the importance which it lost earlier to cotton, and is benefiting from the recent tendency towards greater variety of crops. In 1934 1,388,673 feddans were sown. In 1939 the area had increased to 1,466,000 feddans, which gave a total yield of 8,600,000 ardebs, or an average of 5.96 per feddan.

[262 439] Almost all the wheat is consumed in Epgyt, by middle-class Egyptians and the people in the towns. Owing to its low percentage of gluten and record earth-content it is barely exportable, though in 1937 Germany was negotiating purchases. Europeans and rich Egyptians prefer foreign flour, mostly imported from Australia or Canada.

[312 242] The fellah sows his wheat in November. He pays great attention to manuring and watering up to the period of the *gaffaf*, after which he waters it only once or twice more before harvest. He harvests in April, with a primitive sickle or by hand. The crop is bound into sheaves and carried on donkey- [492] or camel-back to the communal threshing-floor, where it is untied.

Each family in turn spreads out its crop. The *gamoossa* is brought to tread out the ears of corn spread over the ground. The poorest of the fellaheen beat their corn with [407] their staves (*nabbuts*). More often several of them share a

exception. The fellaheen as a whole use no machinery at all. This is probably due less to habit or ignorance than to an instinct for self-preservation. If machinery is not more commonly used in Egyptian farming, the reason is that the owners find man-power more economical. For the moment the two points of view coincide. But it will not always be so. One day the fellaheen will increase their demands, and machines will become more profitable to the landowners. Manual labour should keep its leading place, however, for to mechanise labour in the Nile Valley would be to destroy the organic relationship which has grown up between the cultivators and their soil, and overthrow a balance now preserved by methods of labour appropriate to an abundant population.

2. Conditions of Work

To this soil the fellah devotes all his energies. He gives himself to it without reserve, even passionately when it is his own. But that is very rare. Here man belongs to the land, not the land to him. This is the true cause of both his lethargy and his poverty. None of the conditions under which he may labour make for freedom. Let us look in turn at each of the varying conditions which obtain today.

The Fellah as Forced Labourer

The *corvée* was suppressed in 1893, but continues to be legally applied in certain cases of public necessity. Then the fellah is mobilised by authority, torn from his field and his village, and sent to the spot where his services are needed.

It may be that the Nile flood threatens catastrophe. On such occasions hundreds of thousands of fellaheen are set to work day and night under the rod of officials and overseers to raise the embankments, build dykes, deal with any escape and watch the barrages.

Suppose a dyke is on the point of breaking. The fellaheen rush in a compact mass to the point of danger, each with his *fass* and basket. They heighten the dyke and buttress it with a great rampart composed of earth, rushes, palm-trunks, and — if need be — maize-stalks and sugar-cane.

In 1934 they saved the country by such efforts. The Government set aside L.E. 150,000 to fight the danger;

own habits often neutralise the treatment he receives, so that these diseases remain as deep-rooted as ever in the peasant class. If only they would pay attention, until more can be done, to the advice and directions which are given them! The answer is that even if they tried they could not hope to succeed, because the conditions under which they live are at every point unfavourable to the attempt. Here lies the heart of the problem.

(4) *Food and Drink*

Water is the first problem; not this time considered for its use in irrigation, which has been studied over and over again, but as a much more vital need in supplying human nourishment. Egypt is a hot country, and the fellah's work makes him sweat, so that thirst affects him more than most other people.

Where the owner of an *'ezba* has installed a pump, the fellaheen may get their water from an artesian well. If their village is on the river bank, they will use water from the Nile, which is silty but fresh-running. But more often than not they can drink only brackish and stagnant water from the irrigation canals.

In these, men and animals cleanse and relieve themselves; vegetables, clothes, and crockery are washed, and carrion is thrown away: and this is the place to which women come to get "drinking water". They bring it home in the early evening, in their ewers or tins, to fill up the great pot, or *zir*, that stands against the house wall. Each fellaha brings back about six gallons each evening for the next day's use. This water she adds to what already remains in the *zir*, so that the bottom is never dry, and never cleaned. The water stands all night, so that some of the dirt settles. It also cools, owing to evaporation through the porous clay. As for the drops which filter through, and which might be used to fill the drinking-pots with pure water for the morning, they simply run to waste in puddles or are drunk by the fowls.

The Government, however, is busily studying the question of supplying drinking-water to the villages, and numerous plans have been made.

Men have always added something to water to give it a taste. The fellah is no exception. Wine he does not drink,

Paradoxical as it may seem, there appears to be a relation between the increase in this "drug habit" and the development of perennial irrigation. It has in fact been proved that this invention, which has doubled Egypt's wealth, has also encouraged bilharzia and ankylostomiasis. These diseases weaken the fellah and reduce his power to work. He seeks relief in the stimulant readiest to hand. As the men, who spend their lives in mud and water, are more affected by these diseases than the women, they are also more addicted to this "black tea" (**).

The cultivation of tobacco, which was brought into Egypt at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was forbidden by a decree of 25th June, 1890. Imported in the raw state from Greece, Turkey and Japan, and processed in Egypt, it is too dear for most of the fellaheen. As with coffee, it is in much greater use in the towns (*).

As a rule the fellaheen eat three meals a day; at sunrise before leaving for work (*futûr*); about 10 o'clock, in the field (*ghâda*); and at home at dusk (*'asha*). The fellaheen always sit cross-legged on the ground, and eat with their fingers.

Those at work usually eat their lunch (*ghâda*) in the open air and in company, each taking his food from the plate or enamel pot his wife has brought him, while the water bottle passes from hand to hand.

The chief meal is supper, which consists of warm cooked food eaten with the family. Cooking is done with oil over a Primus stove, or in a household oven fed with strawed cow-dung (*gilla*).

The fellaheen do not go in for cattle-rearing, and as meat is expensive they cannot eat much of it. They have mutton or beef at most once a week, and at least on the two great festivals, or when an animal is killed by accident. This means an orgy, at which everyone puts away tremendous helpings of food. Every now and again some rich man, for a vow or a funeral, kills an ox or *gamoossa* and gives away its meat; then the poorest can have a feast for nothing.

Those who live on the banks of the Nile, a large canal, or a lake, use nets to catch small fish, which they cook in oil. But most of them are limited to vegetables. Onions (*bassal*), turnips (*lift*), green peppers (*filfil*) and cucumbers (*khiyâr*) are eaten raw. Vegetables which they cook are ladies' fingers (*bâmia*) and *molokhiya* (Jew's mallow) (*), both of

778 the patron saint of the village, who is called 'Sheikh' or 'Wali' or 'Sîdi' So-and-So.

The monument usually stands outside the built-up area, often close to a well or a canal and shaded by trees, which are themselves the objects of veneration. It consists as a rule of a cubical building about twenty feet square, topped by a dome (*qubba*), and whitewashed all over. The sheikh's body does not always lie within. There may be only [782] an empty tomb surrounded by palm branches, candles, shreds of cloth, bits of hair, and harvest offerings. The caretaker of the tomb is maintained by the community, or by the income of a pious foundation (*waqf*). His post is often hereditary.

796 The day of the *mulid*, or anniversary of the holy man, 527 is a great holiday for the villagers. All of them make their way to the holy spot and go through the traditional ceremonies — dances, circuit of the tomb, and incantations (50).

764 The resting-place of the dead is some distance from the homes of the living. The cemetery is always a piece of waste land, unfit for cultivation, on the débris of an abandoned village (*tell* or *kom*), or on the sand below the cliffs at the desert edge. Sometimes, as at Minia, it lies on the other side of the Nile. The village of the dead is made up of separate tombs packed closely one against the other. They may be rectangular cemented blocks with pillars at head and foot, or simply mounds sprinkled all over with white pebbles or marked by two rough stones or a couple of vertical palm branches which are renewed every year. There are no in- [769] scriptions and no flowers, but every family knows where its dead are buried, and comes to visit them on the first day of the Great Bairam, when the whole village goes off to the cemetery to honour the dead and to feast and make holiday [527] over their tombs. On that day the village is as empty and deserted as it is in October, when everyone has gone out to pick the cotton.

361 It is not yet time for us to go inside the village. In 312 artists' pictures of Egyptian villages there is always a pool 311 to reflect the dull mass of houses with its coronet of trees. 316 In reality this pool is a large greenish pond of stagnant water, as poisonous as it is picturesque. Nearly every village has one, almost out of necessity. To build houses, make bricks, engineer a watercourse or strengthen a dyke, local

material is used, that is to say the nearest available earth. Thus large holes have been created, which have been dug deeper and wider, and have then filled up with water. These are the *birkas* or village ponds, which serve as drinking-troughs for animals, as swimming-pools for children, and sometimes as sources of water for the housewife.

The Government has had fifty-odd of these hotbeds of disease filled in, not without meeting opposition from the fellaheen, whose habits and customs have thus been disturbed. Eighteen such ponds needed 10,000 cubic metres of earth.

Not far from the *birka*, still outside the village, is the *gurn*, or winnowing and threshing-floor. This is a flat patch of ground covered with cow-dung and earth, which has been levelled and trodden down. Its size is proportionate to the number of families that use it. The *gurn* is common property, and nobody can appropriate it. It is big enough for ten groups to work at a time, until all have winnowed their corn. It also serves as a public square for meetings, though often an adjacent piece of waste ground supplements it for this purpose. Not far away can be seen a great rubbish heap made of dirt, dung and carrion. This heap would overtop the houses, if the dogs and birds of prey did not come regularly to reduce it, and if the fellaheen did not take manure from it. It would be an even greater danger to public health than the *birka*, if the sun did not disinfect it.

Still outside the village, particularly in the Fayum and in Middle Egypt, there may be square towers, as much as thirty feet high, banded in black and white. Their heavy base, seven yards by four, gives them the appearance of forts, but they are in fact pigeon-cotes. You can see them assailed, at sunset, each by a cloud of from fifteen to twenty thousand pigeons coming back to roost after feeding among the fields. The construction of these "houses", requiring an outlay of from L.E. 200 to L.E. 300 each, is a specialised trade. It is beyond the means of our fellaheen, and can be undertaken only by an *omda* or big landowner. In the South a pigeon-cote is often built on a corner of the rooftop, thus raising the skyline of the village ; but as a rule these houses with pigeon-cotes, whether built-on or independent, do not form part of the village itself. They stand apart, and can be distinguished by their extra storey, their more pretentious appearance, and their gardens. Such are the owner's villa on an *ezba*, or

Chapter VIII

TRADITIONS OF THE SOIL

181 Certain traditions, rites and ceremonies are handed down from generation to generation without being either questioned or understood(**). These are traditions of the soil, bearing witness to the union of the fellah with his field, and the closeness of the peasant group to soil and water and their products.

This intimacy was clear enough when we were considering the work, life and home of the fellah. We shall do well to prepare ourselves for a study of the fellah's psychology (Chapter IX) by considering some of the traditional rites and customs which are to be met with at every turn of his life.

These are not merely superstitions, though it would be as difficult for us as it is for the fellaheen themselves to explain the origin or meaning of them all. One thing they all seem to have in common: they point to a mysterious correlation between nature and man. Unconsciously or subconsciously, in repeating these rites the fellah shows an instinctive feeling that he belongs to the soil. It is a feeling which has contributed a good deal to the stagnation of the Egyptian countryside.

312 271 823 The fellaheen have a great respect for water, the water that comes from the Nile. They avoid filtering it, so as not to take the life out of it. They bring it to be blessed by the passing missionary, and offer it as a familiar and much-appreciated drink. They never mistrust it, and make no distinction between washing- and drinking-water. All water is good, like the Nile from which it comes.

796 823 The festival of the Bride of the Nile, or the Cutting of the Dam, takes place in Cairo (**) at the height of the flood. The fellah has no part in it, but he feels much more than any townsman that the Nile is male and alive. The river is always flowing within his sight, either in the foreground,

Today only 25% of the population, that is to say the inhabitants of the towns, drink pure water. A few new waterworks are established from time to time. In 1940 the whole *mudiriya* of the Fayûm, the furthest from the Nile, was fitted up with a model installation. But the fellaheen are still slow to make use of these benefits. For example at Nekhéla, a big village of 20,000 souls near Abu Tig, a drinking-water supply was recently introduced by the progressive local Council. The women have to pay one millieme to fill a petrol tin or *ballas* at the public tap. But they prefer to use the river-water, which is abundant and free of charge. *Ghaffirs* have had to be posted to prevent them from doing so and to force them to profit by the progress they scorn.

The creation of model villages has been more tempting to Governments. Mohammed Aly over a century ago established a dozen places on a rectilinear plan to serve as examples for others. Unfortunately the example of the unplanned villages was stronger, and today these places are scarcely distinguishable from the rest.

In 1914 the Khedive Abbas II inaugurated three rectilinear villages, each containing 180 houses, 169 of which were for the fellaheen and the rest for public services. Each dwelling consisted of two rooms and a yard. This experiment also failed, as the tenants modified the houses to suit their needs.

Nevertheless, after a twenty years' interval opinion is again turning to model villages. At the desire of the late King Fuad the farms on the Royal Domains have built for the labourers working on them symmetrical rows of houses with only a ground floor. They look like prisons to us, but to the fellaheen they are palaces.

Similar constructions have been planned or copied by a fair number of landowners, who have built cell-like dwellings of red or unbaked bricks for the fellaheen on their *'ezbas*.

The most interesting achievement, however, is that of the *'ezba* of Bahteem, belonging to the Royal Agricultural Society. The first part, finished in 1934, comprises thirty houses for workers and three for officials, together with public buildings. The dwellings run from north to south in five rows, and each row is divided into two groups by a street, widening into a square in the middle. Between each pair of

361
185
654 rows there is a street six yards wide, so that sunlight can penetrate into every dwelling.

The houses are of red brick, with concrete ceilings,
361 and the floors inside are raised a foot above street level.
185 The roof is about thirteen feet from the ground. Twenty of
654 the houses are two-roomed, with a yard inside and a shed
342 for cattle. Ten larger houses have three rooms, with a hall and outhouses. These are occupied by two families each, usually those of a father and his son.

[252 Six baking-ovens have been built outside the housing-
515] area, so that the smoke may not trouble the inhabitants. They are used by all the families in turn. There are also six shower-baths, four for men and two for women, together with laundry facilities.

The village hall will hold seventy people; it is used for
[346] feasts, marriages and funerals. The mosque covers about 600 square feet. The school, which follows the syllabus
[347] for compulsory elementary education, is open to boys and girls. Shops have been opened in order that the people may buy what they want on the spot, and there is a great enclosure with six depots for storing the various crops, fodder for the animals, and agricultural implements.

[312] Water to fill the tanks is drawn from a well by a pumping machine. But this was an expensive experiment, costing L.E. 10,000, and could not be copied by private persons. Something more economical had to be found, which without sacrificing public health would be better adapted to the habits of the fellaheen. In 1935 the Royal Agricultural Society laid a new experiment before the landowners. Twenty houses of different kinds were built in blocks of four, separated by twenty-foot roads. Here the walls are of unbaked brick, and the roof of wood. There are two rooms about fifteen feet by twelve, a small yard, and an inside oven. Each dwelling costs L.E. 25 as against the L.E. 125 of the first plan.

654 The Government, for its part, has decided to build a
341 model village in each *mudiriya*, beginning with the rebuild-
361 ing of Mit Fares in Lower Egypt, which was destroyed by fire. The plan allows for houses of one or two stories with drinking-water and interior drainage; wide streets lined with trees; in the centre a mosque, a school, and a hall for meetings; and on the outskirts a market-place for the

expense, which amounts to about L.E. 70. These *gallabiyas* are not distributed anyhow, but fitted individually by the *nâzer's* wife, according to height and taste. At the Bairam festival there is a general distribution of meat, four pounds to a person, which costs about L.E. 40. Fat is also given to those who have no *gamoossa*. The fruit crop of the orchard is shared out at intervals. Whenever a child is born, a set of baby-clothes is provided.

When a fellah gets into debt, the *nâzer* advances him what he needs, without any trickery. The man pays it off by days of work.

Drinking-water is supplied to all from a pump at the entrance to the *'ezba*. A dozen lavatories and two shower-baths have been set up near the mosque.

This beautiful mosque, built by the Christian landowner, who also provides for an *imam*, brings together the menfolk of the *'ezba* and its surroundings. A *kuttab* was attached to it, but this has been closed since the opening of an *ilzamiya* school in the next village.

Fellaheen who go sick are cared for by the *nâzer*, who has by practice become something of a doctor, or sent to the Government doctor at Mit Ghamr. The wife of this kindly manager, when she was there, used to take care of the people herself, wash their eyes, and give them clothes and good habits too. For twenty-four years she stood at her husband's side.

When she died, they showed that fellaheen are not incapable of gratitude. They discovered by childish tricks, in spite of efforts to keep the truth from them, that she was seriously ill in Cairo. Thirty of them piled into a couple of taxis and drove off to the hospital. It was like a public demonstration, people said. Later, when they saw the *nâzer* and his children coming back in mourning from the cemetery, their grief was as spontaneous as it was general.

This mother left her daughter an example to follow. And follow it she does, with her gentleness and good temper and her mastery of Arabic. It is easy to see how much they love her, those unloved peasants.

This experiment in social justice has not made either the owner or the *nâzer* any the poorer. The estate is one of the most productive in Egypt, and all its products have won prizes at agricultural exhibitions.

21. The GAFFAF is a period of artificial dryness, occurring as a rule in January and lasting forty days, during which the Government allows no water to remain in the canals, so as to allow them to be cleaned by special gangs at State expense. At the same season, since the crops have little need of water, opportunity is taken to fill the reservoirs, such as those of Aswan and Gebel Awliya. 113 [312 805]

The true low-water period, however, comes in April—June, when the Nile is naturally very low and the daily flow is at its minimum.

22. Hartman ; L'AGRICULTURE DANS L'ANCIENNE EGYPTE, p. 119.

23. G. Legrain ; LOUQSOR SOUS LES PHARAONS : Légendes et chansons populaires de la Haute-Egypte ; Vromant, Brussels, 1914, p. 171.

24. (*T*) See also : M.G. Maspero ; CHANSONS POPULAIRES RECUEILLIES DANS LA HAUTE-EGYPTE. N. G. Mavris ; CONTRIBUTION À L'ETUDE DE LA CHANSON POPULAIRE ÉGYPTIENNE.

24. M. Tissot ; ETUDE SUR LE CALENDRIER COPTE ET SES EPHÉMÉRIDES, Mourès, Alexandrie, 1867.

DEVISES QUI ACCOMPAGNENT LES NOMS DES MOIS COPTES DANS LE LANGAGE POPULAIRE ARABE EN EGYPTE, by Y. Artin Pasha, in BULLETIN DE L'INSTITUT D'EGYPTE 1891, pp. 250-267.

25. According to a study by Ibnet ish-Saty' ('Aisha 'Abdur-Rahman) published in AL-AHRAM for the 17th, 18th, and 19th February 1937 there were 25,000 children between 8 and 15 years of age employed in that year in this unhealthy labour. Their day began at 5 a.m. and lasted without any definite interval until 9 p.m. There are in Egypt about a hundred such factories preparing cotton for export, in which the fellaheen work under deplorable conditions. "During his recent tour in Gharbiya H.M. King Farouk visited the TEFTEESH (estate) of Sakka, belonging to the State Domains.... In the room where the cotton bales were being pressed His Majesty observed that the pressing with hands and feet was extraordinarily fatiguing to the fellaheen, 113 464 857

8;Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

42.

The Inventor of the Shādûf.

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[174]

Shādûf is the modern name for a very ancient contrivance for raising water from the river to the higher level of the fields. There is evidence of its existence in Egypt as early as 1500 B. C. It resembles our well-sweep. Tied to the longer end of the lever by a rope, usually of plaited palm-fibre, is a leather pail, while the shorter end is weighted by a large stone or a lump of dry, Nile mud. The pail is filled in the river by the laborer and then emptied into a trench in the field above. (Compare the illustration.) If the banks are high, two or more shādûfs are employed, ranged in tiers, one above the other.

Of course the name of the inventor, Ṣâliḥ Zabâdi is mere invention; just as names are frequently inserted at pleasure, in such songs.

Śawādif
we-ḥbalha līf
wedlauha-glūd ma'zē gudādī.
We-aṣlo mā ṭalla' eš-šawādif
el-marḥūm Ṣâliḥ Zabâdi.

Shādûfs,
Their ropes are of palm-fibre
And their pails of goat-skins.
And it was in ancient times, that shādûfs were invented
By the blessed Ṣâliḥ Zabâdi

[P. 42 is blank]

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43.

Hard Labor.

X 539
461
312

Work at the shādûf (see No. 42) at which the laborer stands up to the waist in water, unceasingly drawing the pail at the end of the lever up and down, is considered one of the hardest of tasks. The songs which they sing while thus employed, of which numbers 42—46 are examples, are usually very melancholy, both in words and melody.

Ḥakamtê, ya bēn, bi-šan'i?
baḥbaḥ el-ḥaiye!
La ummê tibki
wa-la 'amme
wa-la ḥaiye.

Hast Thou resolved upon strangling me, O God?
Loosen the noose!
No mother weeps (for me),
No aunt,
No sister.

[776]

1. "Strangling", namely: from the hard labor. According to Maḥmûd, bēn is a designation for God.

3—5. I, poor fellow, have so little any way, and no one on earth to love me.

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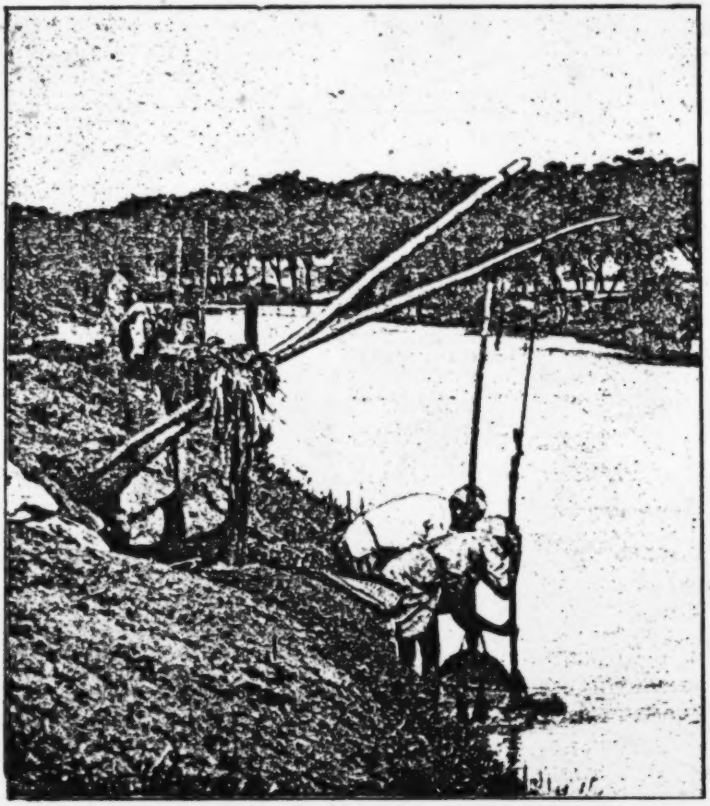
312
406
291



A Shādûf.

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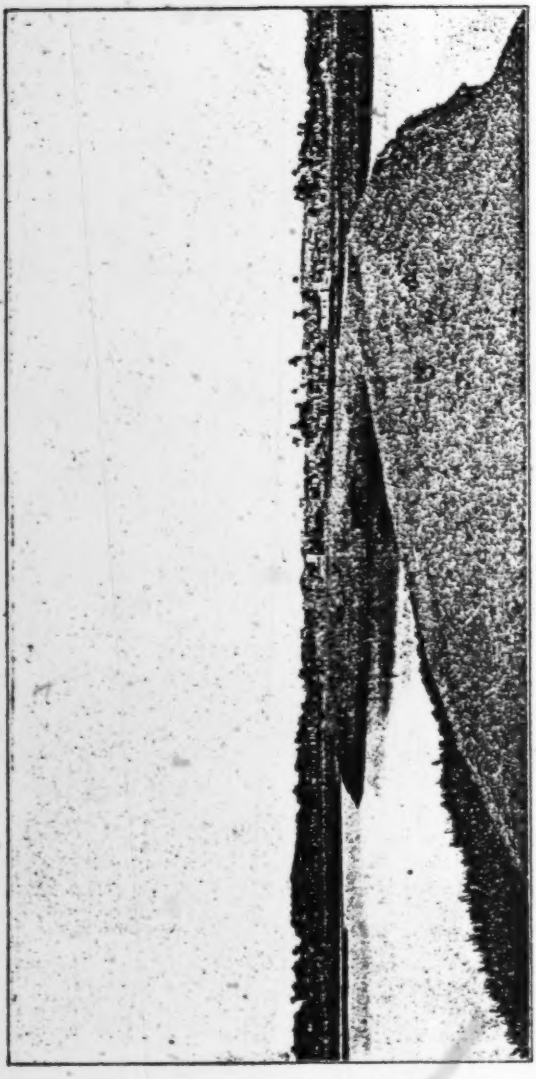
312
491
361



Photograph by L. Borchardt.

The dike which leads from Beni-Suêf to the town of Ehnasye.

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78.

A Ready Answer.

In the morning the women and girls come to the river-bank, to draw water with their Balāliṣ (singular ballāṣ), the well-known, and characteristic water-jars. This is always accompanied by much jesting and talking.

Here a young man teases the girls (ll. 1—2) and they give him a ready answer (ll. 3—4).

Ya banāt, yalli betimlu,
kira-l-mōrade kam?
ʿAšara min abu ṭaʾa
we-bōse min taḥt el-ḥuzām.

"You girls who are drawing water,
How much is the rent of the watering-place?"
"Ten of 'those with the window'
And a kiss under the nose-ring."

3. The peasants call the escutcheon on the back of European coins, a "window". Thus the people distinguish the English sovereigns: "abu-š-šibbâk" = "father of the window" and "abu-l-ḥuṣān" = "father of the horse". The latter are, besides, more popular among the peasants. In our song of course no small coin is meant.

4. The nose-ring is usually put through the right side of the nose, and its pendants hang down over the mouth, so that in order to put anything into the mouth, they must be held aside.

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415
482
291
312
142

Women Drawing Water.

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82.

The Daughter of the Great.

X 339 563 In many villages there live, besides the fellāḥs, Arabs who have become settled. Inspite of the fact that they are, for the most part, not to be distinguished from the fellāḥs in their mode of living and often not even in their dress, yet the Arabs are very proud of their extraction. They are [576] pleased to be addressed thus: Ja šēḫ el-ʿarab = "Shēkh of the Arabs".

Bint el-akabir mālya ʾulletha.
taḥt es-selālim šaḥšaḥit libbetha.
šāwirtĕ ʿa'li bil-ḥuṣān amsikha.
ʿamalit amīre, bintĕ šēḫ el-ʿorbān.

The daughter of the great filled her water-bottle;
[301] Under the stairway her necklace jingled.
I wanted to take her on my horse
But she held herself proudly, as a woman of rank and daughter of the Shēkh of the Arabs.

[342] [312] 2. The stairway ascends on the outside of the house, and beneath it, in its shade, stands the large water-jar (zīr), in which the day's provision of water is kept.

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97.

Good Friends.

539x

Sāqye (sā'ye) is the name of the contrivance driven by 406
oxen, for raising the water of the river or a well, to the [231]
fields. By means of a large, horizontal, wooden cog-wheel [312]
and a smaller, perpendicular one, a large wheel is turned
round, which revolves on the same axle with the smaller
cog-wheel. On this second, large wheel, hangs a long, end-
less chain of jars, which raise the water from below and pour
it into a trench above. (Compare the illustration.) The
peculiar groan and creak of the sāqyes belong as much to
the landscape of the Nile Valley, as do the melancholy songs
of the shādûf-workers.

A youth comes to the sāqye and questions it as to whether 883
the girls of the village have already been there to get water, 539x
as they do every morning. The old sāqye understands him [312]
and replies: "A pretty girl has been here" and tells how [462]
even the ox, inspired, declared: "For such pretty girls as
this, I will work forever; as for the old women, let me alone!"
To this day I can hear the bantering tone of the, "Dog's son
of a steer!" which escaped one boy as another repeated to
me this favorite song.

Ya sā'ye, yammû ṭāra,
waradet ʿalēki-l-ʿadāra?
Waradet ʿalēye ummû nandîl
wil-kaʿb zēi el-ḥiyāre.